Chapter-II
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ISLAM AND THE UNITED STATES:

At the onset of the Cold War, the United States’ policy towards Islam witnessed highs and lows under different administrations and in the face of communist threat perceptions. In the 1950s and 1960s, the administration of US Presidents-- Dwight Eisenhower, John F Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon-- all faced the mammoth task of defending American interests in the Middle East and South Asia. Like their predecessor, President Harry Truman during 1945-53, they perceived those interests as interrelated. At the beginning of Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1946, President Truman identified the Soviet Union as the principal threat to American interests, in the Middle East and elsewhere, a perception that persisted over the next half-century. Western European leaders, under the American-forged shield of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance since 1949, were in tandem in this view of threat. In France, Greece and Italy, the new CIA gave massive financial aid to Rightist parties to enable them to defeat the Communists.

In addition there were growing concerns about Egyptian President Nasser’s doctrine of ‘Arab-Socialism’. Confidential US State Department Central Files note ‘Nasser’s foreign and domestic policies were centered on anti-imperialism, especially concerning

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1 Interview with Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Washington DC, October 27, 2005. Also see John F. Murphy Jr., Sword of Islam: Muslim Extremism from the Arab Conquests to the attack on America, (New York: Prometheus, 2002), pp.159-67.
3 Nasser concentrated on implementing his doctrine of Arab socialism internally, especially after the break with Syria. The National Charter, essentially drawn up by Nasser, was promulgated in 1962. It established the basis of authority for the new constitution that was to follow. It showed a change in orientation from the nationalist goals of the original revolution and emphasized that Egypt was an Arab nation based on Islamic principles. See Nasser and Arab Socialism, U. S Library of Congress, http://countrystudies.us/egypt/34.htm (Accessed on July 24, 2005). Montasser Al-Zayyat, The Road to Al Qaeda: The story of bin Laden’s Right-Hand Man, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp.21-24.
the eradication of all traces of British domination.\(^4\) Thus, there were efforts at defeating communism and principles such as Nasser’s, by an equally lethal force—Islam. Consultations with planners in conservative Muslim and Arab States, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia led to the growth of a unity of purpose of using Islam to counter the Soviet influence. A tacit consensus emerged among the American policy makers that, Islam, if translated into politics, could be harnessed as a mighty force to oppose Moscow in the Cold War. Thus began what was, at first, merely a flirtation between America and Islam, more specifically an alliance with some of the most conservative and fanatical followers of Islam, ‘a strange love affair which went disastrously wrong.’\(^5\)

**Western Perception of Islam:**

Since the end of Cold War, the perception of Islam as a potential threat to the West significantly increased. For instance, immediately after the demise of the Soviet Union, the late Manfred Wonner, as NATO secretary general, openly identified Islam as a source of threat, giving an important glimpse into Western thinking and insecurity.\(^6\) The views of scholars such as Huntington illustrate how such views have reached the heart of the academic establishment.\(^7\)

The Western vision of Islam is anchored in the ancient era of crusades, with mystified images of holy warriors, fired with zeal of martyrs, storming the battlements of some crusader castle still exists. Within the Western psyche there appears to be an almost paranoid fear of Islam as something “wild, mindless and potentially overwhelming.”\(^8\)

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\(^5\) John K Cooley, p.3. Also see Montasser Al-Zayyat, p.14.


the West and particularly in the United States, ‘Islamism has come to be seen as a disruptive force that threatens friendly Arab regimes, has a strong anti-Western bias, and is anti-democratic and a source of terrorist activity.' However, such perception was only a post-Cold War phenomenon.

A focal element of the debate within the Islamic world has been how far Islam can adapt itself to dominant western cultures. Governments in Islamic countries have increasingly been targeted by radical Islamist groups for being too compliant with the West. These movements have found support base with the impoverished sections of the society. Radical Islam has therefore been a response to relative disadvantage as well as to the chaos of civil conflict. The western perception, more so the media, has made recurrent use of the term “Islamic fundamentalists” as a catchword to categorize any movement that has taken a radical turn. Thus, there is a lurking danger, in categorizing the various Islamists movements and labeling them without considering the context and situations in which they have arisen and thereafter expanded.

In this context, it would be useful to distinguish between the Islamists from the fundamentalists, even though these terms have been interchangeably used in writings on Islam. Olivier Roy maintains that ‘three points clearly separate the Islamists from the fundamentalism of ulamas: political revolution, the sharia, and the issue of women. Islamists consider that the society will be Islamised only through social and political action. Islamist movements insist less on the application of the sharia than do the fundamentalist ulamas.’ Thus, Islamist movement conceives itself explicitly as a socio-

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political movement founded as much, in terms of a political ideology as in terms of a religion.

Any research on Islamist movements needs to take into account the local influences to maintain objectivity and more importantly, avoid the pitfall of stereotypes. Mark Huband sums up the requirement.

'It is vital to remember that the Islamic movements are made up of individuals with their own histories, experiences, and views on society. For the most part they live in countries that have failed to satisfy their economic, social, political, and individual needs. Their disappointments have been accompanied by an awareness of the cultural richness of the religion into which they have, as a matter of course, been raised. The tension between these two feelings is dramatic. Faith lies at the heart of Islamism. But it is society that has nurtured the particular Islamist movements, creating varying and often greatly opposed views within an Islamist phenomenon that has emerged throughout the Islamic world but that is nevertheless a mistake to view as united, homogenous, and intent upon returning the Islamic world to the practices of the past.'

The Islamic world entered a religious era that largely cancelled out the nationalist period which preceded it and by the 1970s, Islam had proven to be a major force in the public life of Muslim societies, confounding the presuppositions of a development theory predicated on the progressive Westernisation and secularisation of society. With the exception of a few States like the Saudi Arabia, most Muslim countries following independence had turned to their Western allies for development models. However, events in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, such as the 1967 Arab Israeli Six Day war, the Chinese Malay Riots in Malaysia, Pakistan-Bangladesh war of 1971 and civil war of the mid-1970s in Lebanon changed that thinking. These events led to introspection across the Muslim world and "many in their disillusionment began to re-examine and question their lot... The experience of failure triggered self-criticism and a quest for identity and authenticity, as many decried their loss of not only political power, but also cultural identity. The failures of increasingly discredited secular forms of nationalism-

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11 Mark Huband, ibid., p.xviii.
13 These examples have been cited in John L Esposito, ed., Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform? (London: 1997), p.2. In all these incidents anti-Muslim forces gained ascendancy.
from Arab nationalism to Muslim nationalism-strengthened new voices who appealed to an Islamic alternative, calling for the Islamisation or re-islamisation of society. Marsden attributes the introspection to a ‘major fear amongst the religious movements that the societies to which they belonged would lose their religious beliefs, that the wave of secularism would overtake them."

The Islamic States looking for a theoretical basis for the Islamist movement fell back on ideological movements such as the Society of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the Jamaat-i Islami of Pakistan, established by Abul-Ala Maududi in 1941. Ideological influences were also drawn from the teachings of Sayyed Qutb in Egypt, and Khomeini in Iran. Writers like Marsden trace the origin of such theoretical basis to reflections among religious scholars and intellectuals in the Islamic world on Western domination, and how Islam might be modified to adapt to new circumstances. The theoretical basis formed in different countries, yet with strikingly similar overtones, had not emerged ‘as a political force until after the Israeli-Arab war of 1973.'

The 1970s witnessed the dramatic emergence of militant Islamist movements in most of the Muslim nations. This growing unrest reached its peak with the triumph of the Iranian revolution in February 1979. A new Islamic Republic was built, which overturned all preconceptions and all common wisdom about Islam. A religion that had previously been viewed as a conservative and retrograde, whose social and political relevance was declining in the face of progress and modernisation, suddenly became the focus of intense

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15 Peter Marsden, ibid., p.59.  
16 Created in 1928 and broken in 1954 by Nasser’s New State, the Muslim Brothers over the years had developed a model for 20th century Islamist thought and action based on the work of the Society of Muslim Brothers’ founder Hassan al-Banna. In the 1980s, a new interpretation of the brotherhood’s ideology appeared among progressives, who saw the Islamist movement of their own time as a continuation of what the Brothers had begun. For details see Gilles Kepel, Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam, (London: I B Tauris, 2002), pp.27-30. Also see Montasser Al-Zayyat, ibid., pp.29-47.  
17 Maududi’s first book, Jihad in Islam, published in the late 1920s was against the project for a circumscribed Muslim State that gave power to the nationalists. He agitated for an Islamic State covering whole of India. For him all nationalism was impiety, more especially as its conception of the State was European inspired. For details see Gilles Kepel, Jihad, ibid., p. 34.  
18 Peter Marsden, p.59.  
19 Gilles Kepel, pp.5-6. John F. Murphy Jr., ibid., pp.112-4.
hope, and dread. The radical Islamist movement itself, whose very existence had been unknown to all but a very few, was now associated with a revolution whose contours were vague but whose essential nature to be as radical as it was virtually anti-Western.20

US Policy towards Islam:

There were ensuing debates among governments, policy makers and experts around the world to ascertain whether political Islam is a multifaceted and diverse phenomenon or a uniformly clear and present danger to be consistently and persistently repressed or eradicated.21 Writers like Esposito note, 'The varieties of Islamic activist groups and experiences are a testimony to the flexibility of Islam and of political Islam in particular. They illustrate the extent to which specific contexts, differences of political economy, distinctive personalities and ambitions of individual leaders or ideologues, and Islam's capability of multiple and varied interpretations all shape the ideology and actions of Islamic movements. This diversity underscores the multiple meanings and usages of Islam by Muslim rulers and Islamic organisations and their differing attitudes toward and relationships with the West, as well as the diversity of strategies and tactics employed by mainstream activists versus violent radical revolutionaries.'22

The United States and its allies, including Britain, France and Portugal, with the aid of the Shah of Iran found ways of waging proxy wars in Africa and Asia against adversaries and allies of Moscow. Such proxy wars required no commitment of ground troops and entailed none of the risks of casualties of the magnitude suffered by the United States and France in Southeast Asia from the 1950s through the 1970s, or by France in Algeria during 1954-62.

Some writers, however, opine that the United States paid little attention to Islam's role in Iran under the Shah and thus, the Islamic Revolution in 1979 that overthrew him came as

a surprise. The hostage crisis in 1979 blocked any rapprochement with the United States, and religion could not be ignored in dealings with Iran. In the first months, the ferocity of its anti-Western and revolutionary slogan had caused alarm, but America had remained in touch with the government of Mehdi Bazargan nevertheless. The events of late 1979, however, dramatically changed the way the United States and its allies viewed the revolution. The takeover of the American embassy in Tehran and the internment of its staff on November 4 were followed by the Soviet Army’s invasion of Afghanistan at the end of December.

U.S. policy of installing friendly regimes:
The United States' since the 1950s followed the policy of containing Islam through systematically installing friendly regimes in various countries. It can be argued that such a policy in many theatres did contribute to the growth of Islamic radicalism in those countries. The Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) 1953 overthrow of the moderate constitutional Iranian government of Mohammed Mossadegh was followed by years of support for the brutal regime of the Shah. Writers argue that such support led directly to the rise of the Islamic revolution of 1979 in which the Shah was overthrown. However, preceding that the Shah’s brutal secret police—organized, trained, and armed by the U.S. government—largely crushed any liberal, leftist, or other secular opposition to the monarchy, leaving only the mosques as a viable organizing point for resistance. The result was a movement with a strong Islamic identity and a virulent antipathy for the

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24 Mehdi Bazargan (1907-1995) was a French-trained engineer and a long-time pro-democracy activist. A deputy prime minister when the nationalists came briefly to power in the early 1950s, Bazargan also participated with Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani and others in a reform movement in the early 1960s aimed at democratizing the Shi’it clerical establishment. Bazargan was imprisoned several times during the 1960s and 1970s for his nonviolent opposition to the Shah through groups such as the Liberation Movement of Iran, which he cofounded in 1961, and the Iranian Human Rights Association, which he cofounded in 1977. When the Shah was forced out of Iran in 1979, Khomeini appointed Bazargan as provisional prime minister, but he resigned within a year, complaining that radical clerics were undermining his government. He continued to serve in the Iranian parliament for several years, then lived in a sort of political limbo until his death in early 1995. http://www.persianiran.com/personalities/bazargan.asp (Accessed on September 12, 2005)
United States and the West in general.\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, the U.S. support for the regime of Jafaar Nimeiry during most of his repressive rule of Sudan from 1969-85 led to the destruction of much of Sudan’s civil society. This made his successors’ efforts to build a viable democratic system, following Nimeiry’s overthrow in 1985, virtually impossible. The result was a coup by right-wing Islamist military officers three years later.\textsuperscript{26}

During the 1970s and 1980s, the destruction of moderate Muslim-led factions in Lebanon by US backed intervention and occupations from Syria and Israel—and later military intervention by the United States itself—led to the rise of more sectarian groups such as Hezbollah. For twenty two years the United States refused to insist on Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, as required by a series of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions, or to push for a withdrawal through the peace process. Israel only withdrew in 2000 after Hezbollah’s successful guerrilla campaign forced them out, greatly enhancing their stature.

\textbf{United States’ support for Extremist regimes:}

Though the US government has used the threat of “Islamic fundamentalism” as a justification for keeping a high military profile in the Middle East for over 20 years, it followed a policy of supporting Muslim extremists when they were perceived to support American interests. For example, during the 1980s, the United States heavily armed a reactionary Islamist military government in Pakistan, and even clandestinely supplied weapons to the Khomeini regime in Iran. Thus, writers observe that ‘it would be a mistake to assume that the United States is morally opposed to fundamentalist governments or extremist Islamic movements. The degree of United States’ opposition or support for reactionary Islamists is related not to their level of violence and repression, but to their perceived willingness or unwillingness to cooperate with U.S. political and economic interests.’\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{26} Dilip Hiro, ibid., pp.156-67.

\textsuperscript{27} John F. Murphy Jr., ibid., pp.112-4. Also see Gabriel Kolko, ibid., pp.46-57.
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AFGHANISTAN AND THE POLITICS OF ISLAM:
For centuries, political power in Afghanistan has drawn its ultimate authority from Islam even though it has been subject to tribal interpretations of the Afghan society. During the 19th century, tribal chiefs were traditionally empowered by the tribal assembly, the jirga, to rule primarily in accordance with the customary law, except where Islamic law or sharia, naturally took precedence. Thus, the Afghan Chiefs were distinct from those in many other Islamic societies, where leaders were empowered by the council of religious leaders, the ulama. The tribal chief was therefore, bound primarily to uphold tribal tradition. Traditional fundamentalism, that is, the will to have the Sharia as the sole law – has been pervasive right through modern Afghan history. Most of the tribal and popular uprisings whether against an imperial power (Great Britain and the Soviet Union) or a reformist government (King Amanullah in 1928, President Daoud in 1975 or Nur Mohammad Taraki in 1978) were waged in the name of Islam. Rural mullahs were usually at the core of such reactionary movements. Thus, Islam has been a ‘force unifier’ to rally against the infidels and resist change.

International Islamist Links of the Afghan Islamic Movement:
Since its founding, Afghanistan has been a Sunni Muslim State of the Hanafi fiqh. The first Afghan empire in 1721 originated in resistance against an attempt by the Safavids to force Shiism on Kandahar, and Afghanistan has always been strongly Sunni, despite the incorporation of the Imami Shia hazara ethnic group and a few other Imami and Ismaili groups. Today these constitute perhaps 15 per cent of the population.

Though at the cross roads of Asia, Shiite Iran stood between landlocked Afghanistan and the Arab world, and most of the external influence on Afghan Islam came from either India or Central Asia, including the Naqshbandi revival, the movement of the mujahideen of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (which developed into today’s Ahl-I Hadith) and from Maududi’s Jamaat-i Islami. Sufism of various hues was widespread in Afghanistan. The

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28 Mark Huband, ibid., p.5.
30 Olivier Roy, ibid., p.199.
rulers' legitimacy was proclaimed by the Mujaddidi family, heads of the Naqshbandi order, and the royal clan intermarried with both the Mujaddidis and the Gailanis, chiefs of the Qadidri order.  

The links to the Arab world that contributed to the development of Arab participation in the Afghan jihad were initiated by the Afghan state in its quest for Islamic legitimacy. Afghan rulers feared privately educated ulama attached to the tribes as well as the ulama educated in British India due to their penchant for preaching jihad against the government. Since the late 19th century, Afghan governments had denounced such movements as Wahhabi, linking them to the anti-Sufi Salafi movement of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.  

The Islamic movement in Kabul had roots in the 1950s, when a group of students and teachers at the faculty of theology of Kabul University, including some who had contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood while studying in Egypt, began meeting to study how to refute the arguments put forward by the Marxists on campus. In the 1950s and 1960s, sending students into the turbulent Islamic milieu of Cairo, brought the young Afghan scholars into contact with the Muslim brotherhood and the exciting new writings of the Brotherhood’s most charismatic thinker, Sayyid Qutb.  

After 1965, the Muslij Youth Organisation (sazman-i Javanan-i Musulman) was found which formed a leadership council (shura) in the beginning of 1973. Persons like Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ghulam Rasul Sayyaf, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar were associated in various capacities with the shura, which later selected the name Jamaat-i Islami for the movement.  

Following the 1973 coup, the movement's leadership fled to Pakistan where it ultimately broke into several factions. However, programmes of all factions especially the Hizb and the Jamiat, had significant influence of the writings on Qutb and

33 Dilip Hiro, ibid., pp.178-81.  
34 Gilles Kepel, ibid., p. 182, Montasser Al-Zayyat, ibid., pp.27-35.  
35 Olivier Roy, ibid., p.201.  
36 In 1975, the movement split into two: Jamiat-i Islami and Hizb-i Islami. After 1978, another faction was Hizb-i Islami was found by Yunus Khalis. See Esposito, ibid., p.183.
Maududi, particularly in their use of the term *jahiliyyah* (one that seduces Muslims away from the Divine Law) to describe Western or Communist societies.

Although Afghan Islamism had its own momentum, it has always been closely dependent on other Islamist movements. Sociologically and ideologically, they were very close to their Middle Eastern counterparts. Afghanistan has been part of this wide movement of Islamic revivalism, which had engulfed the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. From the political mobilisation of the Kabul students (1965-71) to the war against the communist regimes and the Soviet invasion (1978-92), the Islamists have been in the limelight of the Afghan political scene.

The Islamists had been in contact with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and had regular contact with the Pakistani Jamaat-i Islami, but at first they had no formal links with either. The ideology of the Afghan Islamists has been entirely borrowed from the two biggest mainstream Islamist organisations, namely the Muslim Brotherhood and the Pakistani Jamaat-e Islami. Moreover, the Afghan movement has sometimes been seen as just an offspring of these organisations. Both were instrumental in the formation of the Afghan Islamist cadres: Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ghulam Mohammad Niazi (founder of the Jamiat-e Islami), as well as Sebghatullah Mojadidi, spent years at Al Ahzar University in Cairo, where they were involved in Muslim Brotherhood activities. The younger members, like Hekmatyar, were close to the Pakistani Jamaat-e Islami, which regards itself as the ‘Godfather’ of its Afghan brothers: the fact that Qazi Hussain Ahmad, who was to become the Amir of the Jamaat in the late 1980s, was himself a Pushtun and had been in charge of Afghan affairs during the 1970s, is evidence of this connection.

The 1980s saw the peak of the Islamists’ influence as they secured the bulk of foreign help for the resistance, and attracted many foreign Islamist militants from the Middle East, who joined their training camps from 1985 until the early 1990s. Faced with a

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37 Olivier Roy, ibid., p.200.
38 For a detailed history of Afghan Islamist movements see Olivier Roy, ibid.
military occupation by an infidel power, Muslims had to engage in *jihad*, which in itself Islamised Afghan society. But after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the Afghan Islamist movements also experienced the general decline of influence which has pervaded most of the other Middle Eastern radical groups. Thus, even before the fall of Kabul to the *Mujahideen* in April 1992, ideology played little role in political alignments, which had more to do with the growing ethnic polarisation of the country. But the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s suggested that the appeal of Islam for building a new political order had not faded away.

**Islam and Ethnicity in Afghanistan:**

Although all parties in Afghanistan are based on an ethnic constituency, none of them promises to create an ethnic state, or even to promote the interests of a specific ethnic group. But all of them pretend to play for the centre—from the Taliban, who demand nothing less than the recognition of their hegemonic power over the state, to the Hazaras, who simply ask for a fair share of central power and recognition of the Shiite system of law (the *Jaffari* code). Although there is a huge discrepancy between the mild views of the *Jumbesh* and the *Jamiat* about what Islam means in everyday life, and the strict enforcement of their version of the *Sharia* by the Taliban, all parties advocate an ‘Islamic Afghanistan’. So the failure of the Islamist ideology to establish a ‘true’ Islamic State does not mean that political Islam has no meaning in Afghanistan. It is still a tool of legitimisation for any power. But it appears to be just a cloak for a power whose basis is purely ethnic and tribal.

This ethnic polarisation has been the main predicament of the Islamist parties. The fight for Kabul between Hezb and Jamiat, from 1992 to 1995, which left the city destroyed,
killed the idea of an ‘Islamic State’. By the same token, the Islamist parties were totally unable to implement any ‘Islamist’ polity, even when they were briefly in charge. When Massoud’s force took Kabul in April 1992, it had to sustain, after some months, a two-year siege by its rival Hezb-e Islami, supported by Pakistan. No measures that could be labelled as ‘Islamist’ were taken by the government chaired by Burhanuddin Rabbani during its four-year tenure, despite the pressure of the pro-Saudi wing of the government, led by Sayyaf. An opportunity for coalition between both rival Islamist groups, in spring 1996, failed to provide them with an opportunity to establish the model of an ‘Islamic State’ as advocated by their programmes; Hekmatyar simply closed the movie-houses and strengthened the ban on alcohol. In fact, the Islamist ideology never provided more than a mere blueprint of a ‘new order’. The effective practices, constituencies and strategies of both parties had more to do with ethnic polarisation and political rivalries than with Islam. Massoud acted in a pragmatic way, driven more by ethnic than by religious prejudices. Hekmatyar, although more adamant about an Islamic agenda, did little to establish Islamic institutions in the areas he controlled. The idea of an ‘Islamic State’ in the 1990’s was largely discredited in Afghanistan. Coupled with ethnic feuds and the transformation of Mujahideen commanders into local warlords discredited the Islamist parties in Afghanistan.

The internal evolution of state in Afghanistan reflected the general evolution of Islamism in two other ways. The first is the ‘secularisation’ of the low-level commanders, where economic stakes, tribal or clan feuds or even a sheer struggle for power supersede the goal to establish an Islamic State, even if the jihad rhetoric is pervasive. Second, the failure of the Mujahideen to establish a stable regime after their capture of Kabul in April 1992, led to the return of a more traditional but exacerbated Islamic fundamentalism of the Taliban. Actors who retained an Islamic agenda shifted from a revolutionary and political approach to advocate the mere implementation of Sharia. This shift from Islamism to what Olivier Roy calls neo-fundamentalism is pervasive among the Muslim

42 The only ‘Islamic’ measures were the ban on alcohol and the enforcement of a sometimes-purely-symbolic veil for women. Gabriel Kolko, ibid., p.56. Olivier Roy, ibid., p.201.
43 Dilip Hiro, ibid., pp.156-57.
World. In this sense the Saudi model is now prevailing over the Iranian one. The surge of the Taliban movement is congruent with this wider development in the Islamic world.

THE RISE OF THE TALIBAN

The emergence of the Taliban in the early 1990’s on the Afghan scene coincided with chaos, anarchy and unending conflict in Afghanistan. Their version and interpretation of Islam was perceived as archaic and distorted by the international community. No image was more central than what seemed to be their rigid control of individual behaviour justified in the name of Islam. The regulations of dress and public behaviour the Taliban imposed appeared particularly excessive in relation to women. They enforced their decrees through public corporal punishment. Many commentators especially in the West described the Taliban by generic, catch-all phrases like "fanatic," "medieval," and "fundamentalist."  

It is therefore imperative not to fall into the trap of labeling the Taliban in a simplistic category given the fact that Taliban as a movement arose in a particular social milieu drawing on numerous external ideological influences. This chapter instead of using stereotypic images and conceptions, seeks to explore the plausible origin and nature of the Taliban, in order to bring out the intricate complexities of the movement rather than its mere over-simplification.

NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE TALIBAN:

The emergence of the Taliban is shrouded in mystery. It would, however, be inappropriate to say that they emerged from nowhere. There have been numerous explanations regarding the origin of the movement, each of them speaking at a more convincing voice than the rest. Understanding the Taliban phenomenon is made even more complex because of the excessive secrecy that surrounds their political structure, their leadership and decision-making process. Ahmed Rashid, writing in 2001 indicated

\[45\] Noah Feldman, ibid., p.12. Also see Francis Burgat, ibid., p.23.
after the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the ‘Taliban are most secretive political movement in the world today.’

In spite of a surfeit of literature, only a handful of scholars have attempted to study the precise milieu, which nurtured the Taliban. The present chapter, while attempting a brief analysis of the existing theories, focuses only on a part of the whole story i.e. the American factor in the emergence of the Taliban. While other opinions and theories have been mentioned in brief, a substantial section deals with the examination of the US policy during the ascendancy of Taliban in Afghan politics. The study of the nature and origin of the Taliban brings to light the external-internal linkages in the emergence of the movement. While difference of opinion exist among scholars on the Taliban’s nature and origin, this section briefly delves into the various strands of thought and draws on common factors.

1. Taliban as a Social Movement:

The very essence and meaning of the word ‘Taliban’ is a plural of the word ‘talib’-an Islamic student, one who seeks knowledge. By choosing such a name, the Taliban distanced themselves from the party politics of the mujahideen and signaled that they were a movement for cleansing the society rather than trying to grab power. This group of students and teachers found themselves marginalised as a result of the years of state building by Afghanistan’s royal regime, which created a new elite educated in the modern schools and universities. The royal regime, the Communists and the Islamists recruited primarily from different sectors of this new elite. However, as a result of the country being thrown into a protracted civil war situation, the rural madrassas remained the only source of education for the Push tun boys who reached school age after 1978, just when the Communist regime came to power. As Oliver Roy points out “the Taliban did

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49 Ahmed Rashid, ibid., pp.22-3.
not after all come from no where". Taliban do not represent a new phenomenon in Afghanistan.  

"The network of teachers and students from private, rural- based madrasas in Afghanistan and the neighbouring Pushtun-populated areas of Pakistan has played an important part in the history of the country for centuries. During the jehad against Soviet forces in the late 1970s and 1980s, they were an important source of recruitment for mujahideen (holy warriors) in the tribal areas. They were particularly prominent in the Harakat-i Inqilabi Islami (Movement for Islamic Uprising) of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi and the breakaway faction of Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party) that was led by Mawlawi Yunus Khalis."

The Taliban movement was formed in primarily in response to the failure of the Mujahideen to establish a stable government after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and the collapse in 1992 of the Najibullah government. In a way, the groundwork for today’s Taliban movement was initiated much before the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. A group of madrassa teachers and students led by Mullah Mohammad Omar formed the Taliban movement to put an end to the ongoing power struggle of the Mujahideen warlords and establish a pure Islamic regime. A writer comments, "They have demonstrated enormous single mindedness in focusing on the military campaign, on the eradication of corruption and on the achievement of law and order. The maintenance and strengthening of administrative structures have been very much secondary concerns."

Ahmed Rashid voices a similar opinion by adding, 'Deeply disillusioned with the factionalism and the criminal activities of the Mujahideens, the Taliban saw themselves as the cleansers and purifiers of a guerrilla war gone astray, a social system gone wrong and an Islamic way of life that had been compromised by corruption and excess.'

Socio-ethnic composition of Taliban:

The Taliban are predominantly Pushtun and have deep ethnic ties. Mullah Omar and all but one top leaders of the supreme shura (Council), in charge of governance are

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50 Oliver Roy, ibid., p.205.  
Kandahari Pushtuns. The Kabul *shura* is also predominantly Kandahari Pushtun but includes more eastern Pushtuns, a couple of Persian speakers, and one Uzbek. Though Kandahar has been dominated by Durrans for centuries, the area also includes some Ghilzais and other Pushtuns, and the Taliban leadership reflects this fact. Furthermore, there was a traditional hierarchy among the tribes of the area, with the Durrani senior tribes on top, Durrani junior tribes next, and other Pushtuns and ethnic groups below. The Taliban leadership structure shows no trace of this traditional hierarchy. Mullah Muhammad Omar descends from the Ghilzai Hotaki tribe. His deputy, and chair of the Kabul *shura*, Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, is a member of the Kakar tribe. Of all the Taliban leaders whose tribal affiliations are identified by Ahmed Rashid, only one is a member of the formerly powerful Barakzai tribe, the tribe of the Afghan royal family.54

The powerful tribal structure of Kandahar of yesteryears, characterized by large landholding clans allied with the royal family, has been shattered by the war. As in the other regions of the country, a new elite has emerged. The Kandahari character of the movement is not tribal but a version of the ethno-regionalism. In the Taliban case the social network of the elite at the core of the coalition is formed from Kandahari *mullahs* who studied in the same set of *madrassas* in Pakistan and participated in the *jihad*. Hence the movement has a strong ethnic and regional characteristics and it has therefore attracted support from many who seek a Pushtun ethnic movement capable of ruling Afghanistan and restoring the power balance in their favour. J N Dixit points out to the rise in ethno-centric rival nationalistic impulses, the Pushtun versus the non-Pushtun antagonism being the most important factor in the Taliban phenomenon.55 Oliver Roy further points out that the Taliban is a genuine Pushtun movement, a feature, which antagonises people of other ethnic background and carries the potential for a strong and politicised Pushtun identity and below the broad ethnic groups exists “micro-ethnic group


called qawm and no political system can destroy these rules of the game." By imposing their rural and ethnic codes like the Pushtunwali they alienated the local populace and remained an enigma to the International community who failed to understand the codes of conduct of the Taliban.

2. Taliban as a Religious Force:
Historically Afghanistan was a devout country where sharia as interpreted by tribal customs prevailed for centuries. Like all the other social and cultural aspects of Islam, concepts like mosque, Imam and Talib came to Afghanistan with the advent of Islam more than 1300 years ago and hence constitute an integral part of the Afghan socio-cultural structure. The Taliban emerged at such a critical juncture in Afghan history when the social fabric of the country was being fractured by warlordism, Pushtun hegemony was dissipated and ideological vacuum grew within the Islamic movement. The Taliban intended to put an end to the power struggle among the parties by a strict interpretation of Islam and uniting the country under the banner of Islam. According to Sharani, the essence of Talibanism based on the particularistic interpretation of Islam is to deny the division of society into divergent interests, whether economic or ideology. Sharani observes religion has become a means to hide these divisions and is mobilised in order to avoid the creation of institutions that can express social and ideological differences within the community.

The Taliban’s anomalous construal of Islam emerged as an extreme interpretation of ‘deobandism’, preached by Pakistani mullahs (clerics) in Afghan refugee camps. The

57 According to a World Bank survey published in 1977, there were approximately 20,000 villages in Afghanistan at the time. Each village in Afghanistan has an average of two mosques, with one Imam and around two Taliban. http://www.afghan-politics.org/Reference/Taliban/facts_about_taliban.htm.
60 Matinuddin, The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994-97, n.3, pp.21-2. For details on deobandism see “Taliban’s origins: Deoband, 1867”, Times of India (New Delhi), December 1,
Taliban subscribes to a sect of *deobandi* school, which asserts that incorporation of local tradition and national identity is dangerous because it dilutes Islam. Deobandis reject all forms of *ijtihad*, the use of reason to create innovations in *sharia* in response to new conditions. The revival of *ijtihad* is a key plank in the platform of the Islamic modernists. *Deobandis* oppose all forms of hierarchy within the Muslim community, including tribalism or royalty, excluding Shia from participation in the polity, and take a very restrictive view of the social role of women. All these characteristics of the Indian and Pakistani *Deobandis* are found in exaggerated form among the Afghan Taliban.\(^6^1\)

According to Oliver Roy, the Taliban is a "neo fundamentalist movement’ although it’s genuine rural base distinguishes it from others of the kind".\(^6^2\) Islamic unification of Afghanistan has been undermined because of the ethnicisation of the power struggle and the inability of the parties to implement an Islamic polity. Roy also points out to the strong anti-Shi’ism of the Taliban, another distinction from the Islamist movement who were always eager to suppress the sectarian differences.\(^6^3\) In a way, the Taliban were not very successful in uniting Afghanistan with the chord of Islam due to its ethnic and sectarian differences.

The Afghan case illustrates dominance of ethnic and tribal ties over those of Islam. Thus, even though there is little value for a debate on the long presence of the Taliban as a socio-religious entity, it is important to distinguish the latter from its present day ‘*avatar*’. William Maley ascribes certain characteristics to the Taliban.

1. Its leadership is drawn from the former *Mujahideen*.

2. The Taliban movement has also accommodated the Pushtuns with notably secular backgrounds.

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\(^{62}\) Interview with Hussain Haqani, Washington DC, 28 November 2005.


3. The movement also has accommodated some of the Kandahari *Pai luch* brotherhood, a secret society, considered to be responsible in the anti-modernist disturbances in 1959 in Kandahar.

4. The movement also has opened its doors to the armed Pushtuns who reflagged themselves as Taliban for reasons of expediency.

5. It draws its resources from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who have transformed a disorganised collection of fronts with local agendas to an organised political force with countrywide objectives.\(^{64}\)

India's former National Security Advisor, J.N Dixit points out the composition of Taliban as originally having five factions, namely recruits from Balochistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, retired military personnel from Pakistan who had joined Taliban cadres, former *mujahideen*, middle level commanders and fighters who defected from the original groups to the Taliban and former members of the PDPA who defected to the Taliban when it came into being.\(^{65}\)

**Structure and Organization of the Taliban:**

The Taliban ruling structure is based on a narrow interpretation of the Islamic precepts of government. It is headed by an *amir* (Mullah Muhammad Omar) who is assisted by *shuras* or the consultative bodies. Since their concept of Islamic authority is that of the *amir* leading a community (*millat*) of Muslims, Mullah Omar renamed the Islamic State of Afghanistan the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in October 1997.\(^{66}\) In making the transition from a militant movement to a would-be government, the Taliban have changed their institutional structure. They do not seem to be maintaining the Taliban Islamic Movement as a formal structure parallel to the state. Instead, the movement is becoming an informal network connecting the leading figures in the new state structure, where power now resides. Mullah Muhammad Omar, the head of state, was 'elected' as


amir al-mu'minin (commander of the believers, a title of the caliph) by an assembly of about 1,200 invited ulama in Kandahar from March 20, 1996 to April 4, 1996. He apparently had the final say on all matters. Originally Mullah Omar headed a ten member supreme shura and a military shura, both based in Kandahar. After the Taliban captured Kabul, they established the Kabul shura, consisting of the ministers and acting ministers,\(^67\) and chaired by Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, whose position is analogous to that of a Prime Minister.\(^68\)

While the Taliban had limited resources and many parts of it were hardly functioning, it increasingly adopted a discourse of Afghan nationalism as well as of their Islamic traditionalism and attempted to recreate a centralised Afghan state. In areas under their control they appointed provincial governors and administrators of districts, cities, towns, and precincts from the centre. The administrators were invariably natives of areas other than the ones they govern. The location of the head of state in Kandahar and the government in Kabul, however, encumbered decision making. It also continued to communicate the message that the Taliban's power was based in one section of the country, rather than in the national capital, which was moved from Kandahar to Kabul in 1775. They 'elected' Mullah Omar as Amir al-Momineen ('Commander of the Faithful'), the only institution they recognised and their ruling apparatus being fluid and flexible, was well-adapted to a tribal and segmented society, which explained the reason for the acceptability in tribal areas.\(^69\) Their main problem remained with the urban population, who saw them as poorly-educated peasants, unable to deal with the complexity of urban life and administration.

**IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE TALIBAN:**

It is imperative not to fall into the trap of labeling the Taliban in a simplistic category given the fact that Taliban as a movement arose in a particular social milieu drawing on

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numerous external ideological influences. A brief survey of the parallels and ideological affinity, the Taliban movement shared with the Islamists groups in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iran, would help understand the external Islamist influence on the Taliban world view and interpretation of Islam.

1. Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood
A number of parallels can be drawn with the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt which was created in 1928, essentially as a youth movement to counter the secular and Marxists ideas gaining ground at the time.\(^{70}\) One is the clear implication from their statements and actions that Islam is not a mere basis for individual faith but a system that encompasses all aspects of society, including individual behaviour and the relationship of the individual to both society and the state. As a consequence, the state is seen as the collective embodiment of the Islamic values espoused by the society, and its continued existence is contingent on the commitment of the citizens to uphold, cherish and defend these core values.

Another important parallel is the right of a movement to take up arms against an existing Islamic government that is considered as insufficiently pure in its adherence to Islam.\(^{71}\) This notion justified the notion of *jihad* to oppose those in power. Thus, while Rabbani, Masoud and Hekmatyar had led Islamist parties, their failure to establish a united Islamic government was regarded by the Taliban as an important factor to justify military action against them. Likewise, the assassination of Najibullah was on the grounds that he had identified himself more with the secular principles of the Soviet Union rather than upholding the core Islamic Values.

While the Taliban's interpretation of the *sharia* is at variance from that of the Muslim Brotherhood, the exclusive reliance on the *sharia* as a legal code to guide the conduct of both the state and the individual is another notable element in the comparisons that can be

\(^{70}\) Peter Marsden, ibid., pp.67-68. Also see Robin Wright, ibid., p.21.

\(^{71}\) The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat by Munazzamat Al-Jihad, an Islamist organisation in 1981 was a direct consequence of the ideological position propounded by Sayyid Qutb which states that Islam gave Muslims the right to attack a person or his property if, by his actions, they considered that he did not merit being regarded as a believer. Montasser Al-Zayyat, ibid., pp.21-24.
drawn between the two movements. The emphasis in the ideology of the Taliban and the Muslim Brotherhood to choose a leader collectively and then obey him unquestioningly is yet another parallel. There existed an aura of infallibility around Mullah Omar, even though he was accountable to the governing shura.\textsuperscript{72}

However, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood's concept of pan-Islam\textsuperscript{73} the Taliban did not have a grand vision of an international community of believers (\textit{umma}) wherein national boundaries were of no consequence. The Taliban were nationalistic in their approach and were initially focused on the need to take control of Afghanistan. The struggle with other Islamist movements was on the basis of relative purity of Islam as the Taliban perceived the other movements to have a corrupting influence on the Afghan society. However, the US air strikes of August 1998 for harbouring America's Enemy Number One—Osama bin Laden imposed a pan-Islamic mantle upon the Taliban. Likewise, immediately in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001, Mullah Omar for the first time raked up the issues of Palestine and the US military presence in Saudi Arabia.

2. Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism

There exist striking similarities between the Taliban and the Wahhabi movement.\textsuperscript{74} Both mobilized men to martyr themselves for the noble ideals of conquering a country, overthrowing an un-Islamic government and establishing an Islamic state. The right of \textit{ijtihad} (the right to interpret Islam based on changing conditions) asserted by the Wahhabis appears to be inherent element in the Taliban.

The extreme puritanism inherent in the Wahhabi ideology and in the enforcement of religious observance is also evident in the Taliban. The establishment by the Taliban of a

\textsuperscript{72} There exists a striking similarity with the Roman Catholic Church where the Pope is being elected by the College of Cardinals and then being accorded infallibility. The \textit{shura} in many aspects is comparable to the College of Cardinals in incorporating religious scholars. Peter Marsden, ibid., p.70. Francis Burgat, ibid., p.56.

\textsuperscript{73} Sayyid Qutb, a leading ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, writing in the early 1950's promoted the concept of pan-Islam- of an international community of believers (\textit{umma}) wherein national boundaries were of no consequence. Robin Wright, ibid., p.34.

\textsuperscript{74} For details on the Wahhabi movement, see Peter Marsden, ibid., pp.71-73. Also see Mark Huband, ibid., p.45.
Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and the strict adherence and enforcement of regulations are directly derived from Wahhabism. The key focus on the eradication of corruption from society as both a rationale for jihad and as an objective is further similarity.

3. Iranian Revolution:
The Iranian revolution demonstrates parallels with the Taliban movement in so far as both set out to generate a mass following of people who were divorced from the relatively powerful elite. Both presented Islam as an all-encompassing religion and emphasized that an Islamic state should embrace the social, economic, political and judicial spheres.

Another important similarity in the Iranian Revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood as well as in the Taliban movement is the significant level of participation by the youth due to which these movements benefited from the radicalism, passion and uncompromising purity characteristic of the ideals of the youth. Therefore, the Taliban were cautious not to dilute the resolve of their foot soldiers by bending to Western pressures as it would provoke accusations from their followers for having diverted from the noble Islamic objective of jihad and martyrdom. Another noteworthy parallel was the prominence given to the religious leader in Iran, with his dependence on Islamic scholars for advice and the designation of Mullah Omar as Amir Al-Mu'minin and his reliance on the Ulema. Mullah Omar's austere way of life resembled that of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.

The multiplicity of these movements is in itself instructive and indicative of the fact that Islamist thinking is at variance, and each of these movements deserves individual attention for their uniqueness. However, for all their variety, these movements were alike in one crucial regard- an overriding emphasis on encouraging a range of ritual and personal behavioural practices. These were deemed central to sharia - divinely ordained morality and practices, as understood in this case by measuring current practice against textual standards and traditions of Hanafi reasoning. Olivier Roy calls such movements "neo-fundamentalist" to distinguish them from what can be seen as a different set of
Islamic movements, often called "Islamist". Limited, as he puts it, the "mere implementation of the sharia" in matters of ritual, dress, and behaviour, "neo-fundamentalist" movements are distinguishable from Islamist parties primarily because, unlike them, they have neither a systematic ideology nor global political agenda. A more precise label for them is, perhaps, "traditionalist" because of their continuity with earlier institutions, above all those associated with the seminaries and with the 'ulama in general.

The Taliban embodied a more conservative but as deeply anti-western brand of Islam. At the same time, they were strongly anti-Shia, when all the Islamists tended to down play the Sunni-Shia rift. In this sense the Taliban are in line with a wider development in the Muslim world; namely sectarian relations are deteriorating (as in Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iraq). This was in line also with the assertiveness of neo-fundamentalism, insisting on a strict interpretation of the Sunnah, while the Islamists put more stress on ideology and politics, thus underplaying theological and even juridical question. The Taliban also express a deep rejection of the Western cultural model, but no strategic opposition to the West. Islam is expressed by them not as an ideology, but as the mere and absolute application of the sharia. In this sense, they also embody the failure of Islamism.

THE TALIBAN ADMINISTRATION:
The State formation by the Taliban movement was based on the interpretation of Islamic principle of Khelafat. In accordance with the Taliban, Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of the movement, is amir-ul-mumanin (the leader of believers) which makes him respectable among all Muslims in the World. In Afghanistan, the amir-ul-mumanin, also the Khalifah, who rules the territory under his control in accordance with the Islamic law, sharia. All Muslims and non-Muslims who live in such a territory are obligated to obey the Khalifah which is selected by a small council of leaders who have religious capacity and communal trust.

77 Discussions with Samina Ahmed, ICG, Lahore, 4 March 2005.
78 Dilip Hiro, ibid., pp.156-57. Also see Neamatollah Nojumi, pp.72-73.
According to the Taliban, establishing an Islamic state means enforcing the Shari’ah in the land of Afghanistan and bringing security and peace to the people. This was a religious duty for the movement, and the leadership was devoted to such an establishment. The Taliban Supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar stated that the goals of the movement were as follows, “To end the mischief in the country. To establish peace and security, to protect life, wealth and honour and to enforce the sharia, do Jihad against the leaders who were devoted for power, and the endeavour to make the land of Afghanistan an exemplary state”.

The Taliban Political bureaucracy is the result of three stage development process. The first stage started in 1994, when the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, rallied forces around him in southern Kandahar and finally controlled the province. In this stage, the Taliban appeared as an armed political organization with very loose organizational skills and an identified political agenda for the country. The second stage of the bureaucratic development took place when the Taliban seized Kabul and announced their administration as the government of Afghanistan in September 1996. In this stage, the key Taliban members were appointed to the important positions of the government. All the appointees to the government ministries occupied their position under the title of acting ministers. These positions were temporary and were subject to change in the near future, which indicated that the leadership was not sure about the individual capability of the appointees. During this three year stage the Taliban expanded their military and civil administration over almost 80 percent of the country and enforced their way of Islamic law.

During the second stage, the Taliban political bureaucracy was run by two major councils: Inner Shura was comprised of six members and led by their supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. The central Shura was comprised of nine members, in addition to Taliban’s liaison officers in Pakistan and later in other countries. The Central

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79 Interview Hamid Mir, Bureau chief GEO TV, Islamabad, February 22, 2005.
Shura was under the control of the Inner Shura and their members were in charge of important ministries.\textsuperscript{81}

The Taliban leaders were the key figures in the military and civil administrations in Afghanistan, and each of these key figures had his own circle operating at the local level. These leaders didn't personally attend the front line against their oppositions, they enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the region they were controlling. In terms of format and responsibility, the Inner Shura had an organization similar to the PDPA, known as the Afghan communist party (1978) and the National Security Council during President Mohammed Doud's term as President (1973-1978). In the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) under the Taliban rule, all the appointees and all the important decisions had to be approved by the Inner Shura.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{81} The Taliban leader who worked in the key administrative positions were as follows:

- Amir-ul-Moamanin, the Supreme leader: Mullah Mohammed Omar

Members of Inner Shura
- Mullah Mohammed Rabbani
- Mullah Ehsanollah
- Mullah Abbas
- Mullah Mohammed
- Mullah Pasani

Members of the Central Shura
- Mullah Mohammed Hassan
- Mullah Noor-al-Din
- Mullah Wakil Ahmed
- Mullah Mohammed Malang
- Mullah Abdul Raman.
- Mullah Abdul Hakim.
- Mullah Sardar Ahmed
- Hajo Mohammed Ghaus.
- Massom Afghani
- The Taliban Liaison Officer in NWFP: Abdul Raman(Rashid) Zahid.
- The Taliban Liaison Officer in Quette: Mohammed Massom.

See Neamatollah Nojumi, ibid., pp.139-41.

\textsuperscript{82} For instance after the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996, the Inner Shura (located in kandahar) appointed a supervisory council comprised of seven members to be in charge of Kabul.

- Mullah Mohammed Hassan Akhund, vice chair
- Mullah Mohammed Rabbani
- Mullah Mohammed Hassan.
- Mullah Mohammed Ghous, third in charge of Taliban leadership.
- Mullah Syed Ghayasuddin Agha
- Mullah Gazil Mohammed
- Mullah Abdul Razooq

ibid., p.138.
The members supervised the civil and military affairs in Kabul although it was not necessary for them to hold government office. The council contributed to the decisions made in Kandahar, but their objection was to make sure that those decisions were carried out by local and regional administrations in the area connected to Kabul. In reality, the members of Kabul council were the movement's core in the military and civil administration, and they endeavoured to reflect the movement political ideology in the daily life of the government. Generally, the leading members of the Taliban movement were active in many parts of the country, and sometimes they held offices.

The third stage of the bureaucratic development occurred since October 1999 and 2001. During this stage the Taliban leadership introduced massive changes in their bureaucracy and made the title of the government ministries permanent. They attempted to use the Afghan constitution that was formed during former Afghan King Mohammed Zahir’s reign, with some pervasions and changes. These massive changes occurred when the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was struggling to reshape their diplomacy due to the US and UN sanctions.83 On the national level, the IEA leaders faced the reorganization of the United Front Liberation for Afghanistan (UILFA) forces as well as the subsequent economic difficulties imposed by the sanctions. The new changes in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan administration were announced via Radio Sharia, the Taliban national Radio Network, in a decree issued by the Taliban Supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar.84

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan administration had a fluid structure that was shaped in accordance to their military expansion in different parts of the country. The shapelessness of Taliban’s bureaucracy provided the leadership to be mobile and also had a positive impact on the formation of their administration. Even though the shapelessness

83 Interview with Rasul Baksh Rias, LUMS, Lahore, March 7, 2005.
84 Discussions with Sophmazai Maiwandi, VOA, Washington DC, Also see Ayman Talal Yousef, ibid., pp.34-36.
of the Taliban bureaucracy is rooted in nature of their movement, the administration was functional within the nature of Afghan social organization.

**Role of External Powers:**

Pakistan overwhelmingly dominates any investigation into the rise of the Taliban movement. There are differing views with regard to the extent of Pakistani involvement in the nurturing of the Taliban into a potent force. However, the fact remains that many of the Taliban were educated in Pakistani madrassas and had learnt their fighting skills from Mujahideen parties based in Pakistan. As such the younger Taliban barely knew their own country or history, but from their madrassas they learnt about the ideal Islamic society created by the prophet Mohammad 1,400 years ago and that is what they wanted to emulate.\(^\text{85}\)

Two personalities stand out in the bigger design to convert the so-called teachers and students into a force to reckon with. The first one was the mercurial Maulana Fazlur Rahman and his Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), a fundamentalist party, which had considerable support in Balochistan and the NWFP. The madrassas in Pakistan were in all probability run by him.\(^\text{86}\) The first batches of Talibs from such seminaries were trained by the Frontier Constabulary Corps and the Sibi Scouts in camps on the border with Afghanistan. Subsequently, reinforcements for the Taliban militia came from other seminaries located in other parts of Pakistan.

The other personality was Naseerullah Babar, the Interior Minister in the Benazir Bhutto's government, who made no secret of his happiness at the fall of Kandahar by saying that the Taliban were 'our boys'.\(^\text{87}\) Babar is credited with converting the despondency of a significant Mujahideens into a support base for the Talibans. General Babar perceptively recognised the role of the madrassas in being the fertile ground for indoctrinating the Afghan Talibs to find a new way of establishing a new order. Closer

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\(^{85}\) Interview with Ahmed Rashid, Lahore, 4 March 2005. Also see Ahmed Rashid, ibid., p.23.


\(^{87}\) Ahmed Rashid, ibid., p.29.
interaction with numerous madrassas all over Pakistan and specially those belonging to
the Deobandi saw the first beginnings of a new puritanical group that would seek to
cleanse the country of its corrupt mujahideen leaders.\(^{88}\)

Not going into the intricacies of Pakistani politics, it can be presumed that the Taliban
emerged in 1993, consequent to a turf battle between the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)
and Interior Ministry in Islamabad during Benazir Bhutto's second term as the Prime
Minister. Interestingly, in the initial phase, the ISI, which had run the Afghan operations
with complete autonomy since the late 1970s, was averse to the Taliban. It continued to
pin faith on the Hizb-i-Islami party under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to dislodge the Rabbani
government. Significantly, the Taliban was viewed by the ISI as a Benazir Bhutto ploy to
reduce the latter's role Afghan affairs. Eventually, however, the remarkable success of
the Taliban forced the ISI to co-opt itself into training and guiding the Taliban ranks.
Thus, despite persistent denials by the Benazir Bhutto government, there is little doubt
that the Taliban have been created, trained and equipped by the ISI and Interior Ministry
Special Forces.

The training and supplying of arms by the ISI made the Taliban emerge as a potential
alternative to the chaos and confusion the country was subjected to after the withdrawal
of the Soviet forces. It's growing popularity witnessed a few thousand disillusioned

In late 1994 and early 1995, the ISI began assisting the Taliban in a massive way by
providing new Kalashnikov assault rifles, large quantities of ammunition, training and
logistical support.\(^{89}\) Indeed, at a meeting in Islamabad in 1994, Hekmatyar complained to
then ISI chief Lt. Gen. Javed Ashraf about the ISI's growing assistance to the Taliban. By
February, 1995 the Taliban forces reached some 25,000, predominantly Pushtuns. It does

\(^{88}\) Interview with Faridullah Khan Wasir, Chief of Wasir tribe, Lahore, March 5, 2005. Abha Dixit,
_Soldiers of Islam: Origins, Ideology and Strategy of the Taliban_, Strategic Analysis, vol.20, no.5,
August 1997, p. 665.

\(^{89}\) In 1995, Taliban possessed around 200 Tanks, 12 Mig-23s and over a dozen helicopters. Mark
Urban, ibid., p.230.
not include over a thousand Tajiks and Uzbeks from the Jowzjani Special Forces sent to Kandahar in the last days of Najibullah's regime.

(ii) The American Involvement:
The American role in creating and strengthening the Taliban can be analysed at two separate levels. While the overt policies contributed in terms of logistics to the Taliban, the indirect role paved way for the creation of a social set up which necessitated a fundamentalist force to take control of the chaotic and disorderly situation.

(a) The Overt Role:
Selig Harrison from the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars created quite a furore in March 2001 when he stated that the CIA worked in tandem with Pakistan to create the Taliban. “The CIA made a historic mistake in encouraging Islamic groups from all over the world to come to Afghanistan.” 90 The US provided $3 billion for building up these Islamic groups, and it accepted Pakistan's demand that they should decide how this money should be spent”.91 Harrison claimed to have warned the CIA authorities against creating a monster, which at a later period might run wild. However, the CIA obsession with defeating the Soviets proved to be myopic. As a result, “some 35,000 Muslim radicals from 40 Islamic countries joined Afghanistan’s fight between 1982 and 1992. Tens of thousands more came to study in Pakistani madrassas. Eventually more than 100,000 foreign Muslim radicals were directly influenced by the Afghan jihad.”92

The creation of the Taliban might have been central to Pakistan's 'pan-Islamic vision', which was assisted by the American objective of bleeding the Soviet's white. Thus, the story of Frankenstein's monster was displayed in real life. This analysis might appear to be too cynical of the American goal. It might also appear as an attempt to belittle the subsequent American concern in dealing and containing the Taliban brand of Islamic terrorism.

90 Interview with Selig Harrison, Washington DC, December 2, 2005.
91 "CIA worked in tandem with Pak to create Taliban", Times of India (New Delhi), March 7, 2001. Interview with Ambassador Dennis Kux, Washington DC, December 7, 2005. Also see Ahmed Rashid, ibid., p.31.
President Reagan and his CIA Director William Casey are believed to have pursued a policy of tying the Russians down in Afghanistan by financing, arming and organising so-called resistance organisations using Zia-ul-Haq’s Pakistan as a staging point. Andrew Hartman provides an interesting description.

“The late Pakistani dictator, General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, clearly understood this broad context of US foreign policy when he administered his 'red template' briefing to the Director of the CIA, William Casey, in 1981. During this meeting Zia pointed to a large map of the Near east that had red template covering Afghanistan and spreading out across Iran, nearing the oil rich Persian Gulf and the warm water ports of the Arabian Sea. The Soviet Union’s military occupation of Afghanistan, over a year old, was the focus of the briefing. Zia’s specious suggestion, that the occupation of Afghanistan represented the ‘traditional’ Russian push southward towards the Arabian Sea, was an attempt to convince the Americans of the imperative need to increase their covert aid to the mujahidin, the Islamic resistance to the Soviet occupation. Casey and US policy makers did not need Zia’s prod; they had already decided to do everything possible, in the words of Casey to grow the war and create for the Soviet Union ‘their Vietnam’.”

The now CIA declassified information shows that William Cassey in 1986 had stepped up the action against the Soviets by taking three significant measures. He managed to persuade the US Congress to provide the Mujahideen with American-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which had a telling effect on the Soviet fortunes in Afghanistan. Secondly, guerrilla attacks were launched on the Republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan from where Soviet troops were believed to receive support. And lastly, Casey committed CIA support to an ISI initiative to recruit radical Muslims from around the world to come to Pakistan and fight with the Afghan mujahideen. Among these thousands of foreign

93 The Mujahideen were predominantly Muslim fundamentalists, part of a loose movement that had become increasingly dangerous since the fall of the shah of Iran. Most Of the Mujahideen came from the Mideast. These were Arabs who had joined the Jihad in Afghanistan, emerging afterward with training, weapons, and combat experience. Most Arab volunteers had been affiliated with the parties of Sayaf and Hekmatyar, though one young Saudi aristocrat, Osama Bin Laden, had set up his own organization, the MAK. Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf & Major Mark Adkin, The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story, (Lahore: 1992), pp. 208-10. Vir Sanghvi, Talibain: Another Frankenstein’s monster, Hindustan Times (New Delhi), May 24, 2001.

recruits was a young Saudi student Osama Bin Laden, the son of a Yemeni construction magnate Mohammad Bin Laden. It is a travesty of history that the same warriors with their private agenda went on to undermine the American interests in the region.

Incidentally, the CIA official website includes Osama Bin Laden as one of the top ten most wanted criminals. However, it conveniently forgets to mention the fact that Osama’s front organisation Maktab al-Khidamar (MAK), which funneled money, arms, and fighters from the outside world into the Afghan war, was nurtured by the ISI.

It can also be mentioned in brief that American understanding of and its attitude towards the Taliban had been heavily influenced by Assistant Under Secretary of State, Robin Raphel, who had met the militia leaders on several occasions. Raphel apparently believed that the Taliban constituted a force under Pakistan’s control would bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, which could serve US interests in the region. This view received endorsement from a significant section in the CIA.

(b) The Indirect role:
If an actor in a conflict situation can claim credit for the positive fall out of the situation, it must also share the blame for the negative state of affairs. If Americans can afford to bask in glory of driving the Soviets away off the Afghan soil, they must also be held responsible for what happened to Afghanistan afterwards. In a way, American policy of neglect did contribute to the development of a social situation, which prepared the support base for the Taliban’s steady growth.

95 Bin Laden first visited Afghanistan as a twenty-three-year-old in 1980, at the behest of Prince Turki Bin Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence. By 1982 he had established a base in Pakistan from which to provide infrastructure for the Mujahideen, drawing on the expertise of his family’s billion-dollar construction business. With Funds from Saudi government, his family and other wealthy contributors, he carved out caves and tunnel complexes in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan, mainly around the city of Khost and south of Jalalabad. For details see Peter Marsden, ibid., p.57.
After the withdrawal of the Soviets, Afghanistan ceased to be a priority area for the American policy makers. "The Afghans, once on the frontline of the Cold War, were left with a devastated country. One million had died during the ten-year occupation. But only three years later, when Kabul fell to the mujahideen who had fought off the Soviets, gory civil war gripped the country...pitted the majority Pashtun population in the south and east against the ethnic minorities of the north--Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen." 98

Even in the hey day of the Soviet occupation, the US policy of granting autonomy to the ISI, created malcontents whose personal interests did not necessarily coincide with that of the Americans.

"The ISI's preferred recipient of the vast inflow of arms, Soviet and otherwise, was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Chief of the extremist Hizb-i-Islami and deemed by Zia-ul-Haq's men, with somewhat reluctant agreement by the CIA, as the most effective of the seven leaders of the seven main groups of the Mujahideen in fighting the Soviets. Later he became a leader, trainer and inspiration to the terrorists and guerrillas of the Afghan international." 99

Richard Mackenzie points at the same loophole in the American policy. He says:

"Prima facie evidence of that failure was the creation of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who gained notoriety in Afghanistan for killing more fellow mujahideen than he did Communists. Despite repeated warnings from Human right groups and western journalists over several years, U.S. government officials rarely deviated from the Pakistani line that Hekmatyar was the most effective and representative mujahideen leader." 100

The analysis of the direct or indirect American role in propping up the Taliban should not underplay the internal environment, which favoured such development in Afghanistan. As Harpviken points out, foreign support is a necessary but not sufficient condition for non-state military mobilisation to succeed.101 It needs to be remembered that before the arrival of the Taliban, none of Islam's extreme orthodox variety, such as the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia failed to gain foothold on Afghanistan. Thus, the Taliban found it easy to interpret their emergence as the beginning of a reform process based on the Islamist

98 Ahmed Rashid, ibid., pp.23-4.
100 Richard Mackenzie, The United States and The Taliban, in William Maley, ibid., p.95.
101 K B Harpviken, ibid., pp.271-87.
notion of *Jihad*—the holy war against the infidels. They vowed to bring peace to the region, establish law and order, disarm the population, and impose the Islamic *sharia*. It was but natural that the Taliban were welcomed by the war-weary Pushtuns. There was no stopping for the Taliban victory march.

It is a fact that the ‘Taliban were welcomed in many provinces, by locals as well as commanders. Such was the psychological impact of the Taliban’s easy advance from Kandahar towards Paktia, Gardez, Logar, Sarobi and Kabul, that some people believed that these fighters of Islam had the ability to bodily deflect bullets. In other areas like Heart and Mazaar-i-Sharif, the Taliban gained control through both fighting and defection of opposition commanders.”

The surge of the Taliban movement does not mean that they are offering a new Islamist model. Their appearance on the political scene coincided also with a wider sense of frustration among the Pushtun population, who never recognized Hekmatyar as its representative, and resented the fact that Kabul was in the hands of non-Pushtuns, for the first time since the creation of the country except for the brief interlude of Bacha-i Saqao in 1929. The striking fact is that the ‘revenge of the Pushtuns’ took the appearance of a fundamentalist movement, the Taliban, who, although are exclusively Pushtun, underplayed any ethnic claim and pretended to represent the Afghan Muslim *mellat* (nation). Interestingly enough, if one has to make a comparison, the Taliban’s brand of Islam is closer to that of Bacha-i Saqao than to that of any other contemporary actors. In any case, the Taliban’s achievement has been to bypass not the ethnic divide but tribal segmentation, which had prevented the Pushtuns from uniting into a single party, as did the Hazaras, the Uzbeks and to a lesser extent, the Tajiks, in the course of the war. Most Pushtun commanders, whatever their ideological affiliation, joined or approved of the Taliban; for instance the former hardline communist General Tanaí; the pro-Western Ruhani Wardak; Jalaluddin Haqqani, the ‘governor’ of Paktia; the pro-Iranian Moazzen; and for a while, the Western-trained diplomat Hamid Karzai. Local Pushtun commanders,

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whatever their political affiliation, supported the Taliban, like Engineer Bashir Baghlani from Pul-e Khumri, a leading commander of Hezb-e Islami. The only exception among the Pushtun notables has been the Gailani family. By the same token, no well-known non-Pushtun Islamist figures joined the Taliban. This Pushtun constituency marks the strength and the weakness of the Taliban; it antagonises the other ethnic groups (Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras) and it creates an artificial unity among Pushtuns, although rival tribal affiliations remain as strong as before. As usual in rural Muslim societies, charismatic movements waging *jihad* in the name of the Islamic *ummah* left untouched the traditional segmentation of the society, but allowed its members to refer to a larger identity.

It is not by chance that the unity of the Pushtuns had been reforged by a religious fundamentalist movement. The Taliban movement embodied the resurgence of a traditional phenomenon in Afghanistan; the coming together of Pushtun tribesmen, in a time of crisis, under a religious and charismatic leadership. Although the Taliban are all members of local tribes, tribal affiliation did not play a role in the *madrassa’s* recruitment.\(^{104}\) The Taliban were enlisted when very young in these religious schools, which turned during the war into military bases. Thus, a religious and pedagogical hierarchy replaced their familial and tribal connections.\(^{105}\) The particularly strong fundamentalism of the Taliban, and in particular their rejection of the access of women to public space, is as much linked with their monastic and rural Puritanism as with the brand of Islam they advocate. But paradoxically, the way the Taliban have been able to supersede tribal segmentation points towards not a new universal Islamic identity, but an unstated, yet prevalent Pushtun ethnic identity. Beyond Islam, it is ethnicity as reconstructed by the polarisation induced by the civil war which is the key factor of political alignment.

The emergence of the Taliban is also closely related to the balance of power and evolution among the fundamentalist movements. While the Hezb had been supported by the Pakistani Jamaat-e Islami, the Taliban have been helped by a more conservative

\(^{104}\) Discussion with General Payendha, Afghan embassy, Washington DC, 28 October 2005  
\(^{105}\) Interview with Faridullah Khan Wasir, Chief of Wasir tribe, Lahore, 5 March 2005
fundamentalist movement from Pakistan, namely the Jamiat-e Ulema-I Islam. They received discreet support from Saudi Arabia, who became estranged from more radical Islamists like Hekmatyar. The Americans, now strongly opposed to radical Islam, might have been in search of another Muslim card, in line with the Saudis, with the aim of not leaving Islamic fundamentalism with no other choice than to move closer to Iran. Pakistan is still playing the Islamic card in Central Asia and also needs Islamic leverage in its policy to establish a corridor from its territory to Central Asia through Afghanistan. This allows Pakistan also to play on the Pushtun connection (since many high-ranking military officers and civil servants in Pakistan are Pushtun), without playing openly on ethnicity, which might be detrimental to its domestic ethnic balance, where a de facto supremacy of the Punjabis and the Pushtuns is hidden behind a Muslim rhetoric. The Taliban had no foreign policy. They only had a strategic alliance with Pakistan. Theirs is a purely Afghan movement which has been instrumentalised by Pakistan, whose constant goal since the Soviet invasion has been to turn Afghanistan into a vassal country by playing on the Pushtun ethnic group and on fundamentalism. However, the prevalence of the local specificities – here the ethnic polarisation of a rural and segmented society under the banner of Islam– on a universal version of political Islam, shows the limits of the Taliban model of Islam.

**Taliban & the Al Qaeda:**

Rohan Gunaratna writes, “Al Qaeda is the first multinational terrorist group of the twenty-first century and it confronts the world with a new kind of threat”. Its uniqueness was derived from the fact that unlike the terrorists of the 1970s and 1980s, it was not guided by territorial jurisdiction. Rather its theatre of support, as well as its operations was global in nature. It used globalization to its advantage, harnessed its forces and constantly looked out for new bases and new targets worldwide.

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Relationship between the Al Qaeda, largely represented by Osama bin Laden and its host, the Taliban was a complex phenomenon. The fact remains that the Taliban hosted bin Laden in spite of its known involvement in terrorist attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. By perpetrating the world’s greatest terrorist outrage on September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda demonstrated the magnitude of the escalating threat and the sophistication of its methods.

Al Qaeda is above all else a secret, almost virtual, organisation, one that denies its own existence in order to remain in the shadows. The close connection of Afghan Islamists with Middle Eastern movements was reinforced during the war against the Soviets. With the blessing of the CIA and of the Saudi Intelligence (headed by Prince Turki), and with the active hand of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), an international support network was established, channelled mainly through the Muslim Brotherhood. Many Arab militants came to fight in Afghanistan, bringing their own view of radical Islam, but also carrying back home their combat experience in the name of jihad. The hub of these informal networks was established in Peshawar through the ‘Office of Services; (Mektab al-khadamat).  

It was in 1987 that the Palestinian-Jordanian ideologue Abdullah Azzam conceptualised Al Qaeda (The Base). The ideological father of Al Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam was also the mentor of Osama bin Laden. At the end of the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad, the perennially fragile political situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan facilitated the internationalisation of Al Qaeda. Having defeated the “evil empire”, and driven by Islamist zeal, most Arab and Asia mujahidin (warriors of God) who returned home from the internationally supported jihad (holy war) in Afghanistan wanted to precipitate radical social and political change. As the political conditions in Afghanistan deteriorated and international pressure forced Pakistan to expel the remaining mujahidin, MAK provided them with a safe haven.

108 Interview Hamid Mir, Bureau chief GEO TV, Islamabad, 22 February 2005.
The resources at MAK's disposal were diverted by Al Qaeda away from Afghanistan into regional conflicts where Islamist guerrillas were involved, principally in Kashmir and Chechnya, but also in Mindanao, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Somalia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Algeria and Egypt. In most of these countries the governing regimes were openly hostile to Islamist movements, often repressing them ferociously. To function at a global level, Al Qaeda created a worldwide strategic framework of Islamist military and political organisations. From the early 1990s onwards, Osama invited representatives of Islamist terrorist groups and Islamic political movements to join Al Qaeda's shura majlis, or consultative council. Al Qaeda has set great store by establishing, infiltrating and trying to gain control of many Islamic NGOs such as government-registered charities engaged in socio economic, educational, welfare projects. According to the CIA, one-fifth of all Islamic NGOs worldwide have been unwittingly infiltrated by Al Qaeda and other terrorist support groups.\(^{109}\) By forming such front organisations – some registered as non-profit and other as charitable – Al Qaeda and its associates have sought to radicalise and mobilise the Islamic Diaspora. By working among ordinary European, North American and Australian Muslims, Al Qaeda has gained strategic depth at the very heart of Western communities.

By designing specialised courses and constructing secret camps to train its volunteers for martyrdom operations, Al Qaeda institutionalised the techniques of suicide terrorism. More than in any other Islamist group, the culture of martyrdom is firmly embedded in its collective psyche. As the first terrorist group to conduct suicide attacks on land (US embassies in East Africa, 1998), Sea (USS Cole, Yemen, 2000) and in the air (September 11, 2001), Al Qaeda has expanded and refined this deadly repertoire.

In addition to benefiting from the largesse of Osama bin Laden, its business and financial committee generates significant revenues from its companies, charities and worldwide investments. The penetration of one fifth of Islamic NGOs by Al Qaeda and other Islamist groups is another source of funding, along with voluntary contributions collected clandestinely in some mosques. Al Qaeda also generates funds from its business operations in the money and share markets and through crime, though there is little

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\(^{109}\) Interviews with former CIA officials, Washington DC, October 2005.
evidence of Al Qaeda having been involved in the production or sale of drugs, despite repeated US claims to the contrary. The Taliban raised a lot of money through the trade in narcotics. Although Al Qaeda has received funding from state sponsors (Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran) its financial robustness clearly lies in its own non-state sources of support. Very few groups have acquired financial assets and independent resources to the extent that Al Qaeda has. Despite a US-led worldwide effort to close down its financial networks, Al Qaeda continues to operate through the hawala, or unregulated, banking system.\footnote{Interview with Peter Bergen, Washington DC, December 2, 2005.}

According to Western intelligence sources, which vary quite alarmingly in their estimates, between 10,000 and 110,000 recruits graduated from Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan between 1989 and October 2001.\footnote{Interviews with former CIA officials, Washington DC, October 2005.} Considering that there were several other terrorist groups operating training camps in Afghanistan in the 1990s, and that Al Qaeda recruited only 3,000, or 3 per cent of those it trained in terrorism and guerrilla warfare, this suggests it has more than enough manpower to draw on, now and in the future. Islamists from all over the world regard its as the very highest honour to be accepted as a full Al-Qaeda member, in fact they almost fight to get is, such is the high regard in which is it held.\footnote{Interview with Faridullah Khan Wasir, Chief of Wasir tribe, Lahore, 5 March 2005.}

Another hallmark of an Al Qaeda attack is its huge investment in the planning and preparatory stages. Al Qaeda spent one and a half years training its operatives before targeting the US on September 11. As such, its preference is for qualitative rather than quantitative targeting. By selectively attacking high prestige, symbolic targets, Al Qaeda aims to denigrate its opponent, expose his vulnerability and prompt further retaliation. After it bombed the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the CIA knew that it was planning further attacks, but the American government lacked the political will and public support to intervene in Afghanistan in the wholehearted fashion required.\footnote{Interview with Al Santoli, Washington DC, 25 October 2005.} Referring to Osama bin Laden, the CIA assessed the threat posed as follows: “We believe he is planning future operations and are particularly concerned that his use of the
word qualitative is a single for increasing the degree of damage future attacks may inflict.”

As was demonstrated on September 11, 2001, the combination of suicidal terrorists and deviously chosen, psychologically damaging, high-profile targeting led to massive death and destruction.